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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Fifty-seventh session

Summary record of the 1199th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 19 February 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (*continued*)

Sixth periodic report of Sierra Leone

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women *(continued)*

Sixth periodic report of Sierra Leone (CEDAW/C/SLE/6; CEDAW/C/SLE/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Sierra Leone took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone), introducing the sixth periodic report of Sierra Leone (CEDAW/C/SLE/6), said that the report had been drafted on the basis of a thorough consultative process involving representatives of civil society, United Nations agencies, different agencies of the Government of Sierra Leone and a legal consultant. Every effort had been made to take into account the Committee's previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/5).

3. The Sierra Leone national action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions Nos. 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) focused on five priority areas for women's empowerment. The action plan comprised outcome and output objectives, strategies and indicators. The action plan involved a wide range of measures to be implemented in cooperation with various government ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and the judiciary. In 2012, legislation had been adopted to address sexual violence, and a national action plan and a national referral protocol on gender-based violence had been drafted by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. Extra court sessions were held on Saturdays to hear cases involving gender-based sexual violence. In rural areas, agricultural business centres, many of which were managed by women, had been established to boost agricultural productivity.

4. The country's third poverty reduction strategy paper, *The Agenda for Prosperity 2013–2018*, was based on eight pillars for development, including one entitled "gender equality and women's empowerment". Gender issues were mainstreamed throughout the other seven pillars of the Agenda as well. The aim was to empower women and girls through education, participation in decision-making, access to justice and equal economic opportunities. The Agenda also provided for a minimum 30 per cent quota for women at all decision-making levels and the establishment of a national women's commission, a national strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy and a women's empowerment fund.

5. During the reporting period a number of legal reforms had changed the lives of the women of Sierra Leone, especially those in rural areas. Steps were being taken to ensure the full enforcement of the nation's laws and to raise public awareness of the people's rights and responsibilities. Efforts were being made to address the issue of female genital mutilation, in particular underage initiation rites that involved genital cutting.

6. Although the 30 per cent minimum quota for representation of women in decision-making posts had not been met, progress was being made: women held a number of positions of authority, including the Solicitor General, Chief Justice, Brigadier General and Auditor General, as well as heads of high-level commissions and agencies. Under the Agenda for Prosperity, free tuition for girls would be extended to the secondary school level. Government grants were available to girls wishing to study science at the tertiary level. Free health care was available for pregnant women, mothers who were breastfeeding and children under the age of 5. Legislation on the prevention and control of HIV had been amended to remove provisions that criminalized the act of giving birth to a baby with HIV. Steps were being taken to provide free medical examinations and treatment for victims of gender-based violence.

7. **Ms. Schulz** said that she was concerned by the fact that the definition of discrimination in the State party's Constitution was not in line with the definition contained in article 1 of the Convention. She was also concerned that, according to the common core document (HRI/CORE/SLE/2012, para. 176), Section 27 (4) of the Constitution nullified many equality provisions by making several exceptions to the prohibition of discriminatory laws. That provision, which ran counter to article 2 (a) of the Convention, delayed the enactment into law of bills that were ready for adoption, blocked progress at the legislative level and provided support for discriminatory provisions in common and customary law alike. It therefore appeared that the Convention had still not been incorporated into domestic law.

8. The slow pace of constitutional review was worrisome. She wished to know whether a definition of discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention would be included in the revised Constitution and whether the State party intended to repeal Section 27 (4). She also wished to know whether every effort had been made to ensure that the results of the review would be accepted in the public referendum due to be held in 2015. She wondered whether there was a time frame for the adoption of the bills on sexual offences, grounds for divorce and the proposed national gender equality commission and whether the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Maputo Protocol and the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

9. **Ms. Patten** said that she would like to know what measures were being taken to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding the independence of the judiciary and whether steps were being taken to improve women's access to justice and meet the challenges faced by the justice system, which included inadequate infrastructure, the poor quality of court decisions, capacity constraints and a lack of due process guarantees. What were the obstacles to putting those recommendations into practice? She would appreciate further information on the work of the National Commission for Social Action and on the impact of the reparations programme. Was any extra budget allocation provided to government ministries specifically for the implementation of the action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions Nos. 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008)?

10. **The Chairperson** said that she would appreciate information on the State party's plans to bring customary courts under the authority of the Supreme Court. She wondered what measures were taken to ensure that customary law did not constitute an obstacle to the realization of women's rights. She wished to know when the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill would be adopted, whether Parliament supported the executive's efforts in that regard and what role women parliamentarians would play in the passage of that legislation.

11. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she wished to know what obstacles had blocked efforts to repeal Section 27 (4) (d) of the Constitution and why it had not been possible to bring the Constitution into line with the Convention. Similar clauses had been removed from the constitutions of neighbouring countries, and their experience could serve as an example. She wondered how much legal force the Convention had. She wished to know exactly how the provisions of the Convention were being given effect at the national level. Although national laws on women's rights had been adopted, it was important for the Convention itself to be legally binding.

12. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that the information provided by the State party did little to address the Committee's previously expressed concerns regarding the urgent need for institutional capacity-building at the national level. She welcomed the recruitment of 33 female senior staff members in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, and she would be interested to know whether all of those women were working on

gender issues. What percentage of the Ministry's budget was specifically targeted for use in addressing gender-related issues? She wished to know why regional gender desk officers were not involved in decision-making processes. Did the State party plan to rectify that situation?

13. Further details on the outcome of the midterm review of the national strategic gender plan for 2010–2013 would be welcomed. She particularly wished to know what progress had been made in implementing the plan and whether any ongoing challenges had been identified. Would the plan be renewed beyond 2013? The Committee would appreciate updated information on the status of the "twin" policies on the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming and on the progress made towards merging them into a new equality and women's empowerment policy. What was the time frame for the adoption of the new policy? Had women's organizations been involved in drafting it?

14. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that budget allocations for the Gender Division of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs had tripled since 2011. Each government ministry, department or agency was allocated targeted funds for gender mainstreaming.

15. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that women's rights groups in Sierra Leone were lobbying for the repeal of Section 27 (4) of the Constitution. Although the Convention had not been incorporated into national laws, legislation was gradually being brought into line with the principles enshrined in the Convention. Awareness-raising campaigns focusing on the Convention were being run. There was popular support for ratification of the Optional Protocol. The traditional justice system had been brought under the aegis of the judiciary, and oversight committees had been set up in all three provinces to monitor the work of traditional courts. A public complaints mechanism was in place. Customary law was considered valid only if it was consistent with laws passed by Parliament, natural justice, equality and human rights. The authority to appoint staff to the local courts had been transferred from the executive to the Chief Justice in order to ensure their independence. Although the adoption of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill was a priority on the President's agenda, the preparatory process was an onerous one. It was hoped that the bill would win passage in the near future.

16. **Mr. Momoh** (Sierra Leone) said that, as a Member of Parliament, his presence in the delegation reflected the close coordination that existed between the legislature and the executive branch of government. He could assure the Committee that every effort was being made to expedite the passage of bills by Parliament.

17. **Ms. Fofanah** (Sierra Leone) said that the Government's gender mainstreaming strategy and awareness-raising efforts were progressing, but sustainable advances towards the achievement of its long-term goals in respect of women's rights were quite limited because most of the related actions had been taken as part of projects that had been funded and led by development partners. As a result, very little national expertise had been developed.

18. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that a gender division had been established within the Sierra Leone police force.

19. **Mr. Vandi** (Sierra Leone) said that, as social welfare, gender and children's issues overlapped, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs had been created as a single entity. All of its 33 staff members would receive gender training and would either be assigned exclusively to the Gender Affairs Directorate or work on a cross-cutting basis for the entire ministry. The regional gender desk officers would not be devolved to the local councils, but would serve as monitors to ensure that devolved functions were being carried out effectively. The midterm review of the national strategic gender plan had provided valuable inputs for the design of the gender equality and women's empowerment

pillar of the Agenda for Prosperity. The results of that review had shown that the plan was on track and was even ahead of schedule in some areas. Issues not addressed in the plan would be covered under the gender pillar of the Agenda. The plan would not be renewed beyond 2013 because thereafter gender issues would become an integral part of a comprehensive strategic plan. Non-governmental organizations had been fully involved in the development of the national gender mainstreaming policy and national policy on the advancement of women, and those twin policies would be merged into a new policy on gender equality and women's empowerment. Extensive sex-disaggregated data on victims of the armed conflict, including victims of sexual violence, and on reparations were available and would be provided to the Committee.

20. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that the President of Sierra Leone had pledged to sign the bill on gender equality as soon as it was passed by Parliament in order to expedite its enactment into law.

21. **Ms. Schulz** said that she would like to know what steps would be taken to raise men's awareness of the importance of gender equality with a view to paving the way for the repeal of the discriminatory provisions contained in Section 27 (4) of the Constitution. Was there a specific time frame for the ratification of the Optional Protocol and the Maputo Protocol? She would welcome assurances that, by the time of the next dialogue with the Committee four years' hence, those bills would have been enacted into law.

22. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that, in his view, the objective was for those laws to have entered into force considerably before the time of the next dialogue with the Committee. The State party recognized the important role played by men in advancing women's rights, particularly in view of the fact that they were in the majority in Parliament. The inclusion of Mr. Momoh, a Member of Parliament, in the delegation bore witness to the awareness of that fact. Parliament had passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children the previous week and would pass the Maputo Protocol before the end of the next quarter.

23. **Mr. Momoh** (Sierra Leone) said that the only delays in the passage of bills by Parliament in the future might be at the committee stage in the event that any amendments were called for.

24. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that she would welcome information on the progress made in implementing the 2004 Local Government Act, which required that at least 50 per cent of ward committee members should be women, and on the lessons learned since that law's adoption. Was there sufficient political will to ensure achievement of the objectives set out under the gender pillar of the Agenda for Prosperity within four years' time? She wondered why the Government had not introduced temporary special measures as a means of empowering women at the local level, since the use of such measures was a powerful strategy for addressing the structural, cultural and social causes of discrimination against women.

25. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she wished to know whether, in addition to the memorandum of understanding which, as mentioned in paragraph 48 of the report, had been concluded between the Paramount Chiefs and the *Sowei*, who initiated girls into secret women's societies, the Government had a more comprehensive strategy, together with clear goals and set time frames, for eliminating harmful cultural practices, especially female genital mutilation. What specific steps were being taken to put an end to harmful cultural practices involving witchcraft?

26. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she would appreciate clarification as to whether female genital mutilation was actually prohibited, as well as more specific information on efforts to raise awareness about the need to do away with female genital mutilation entirely. She would like to know why impunity was so widespread in cases of sexual violence against

women and would welcome statistics on the punishment of persons who had committed acts of sexual violence during the civil conflict.

27. **Ms. Jahan** said that she wished to know whether a comprehensive strategy and plan of action were in place for the implementation of the 2005 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. How often did the anti-trafficking task force meet to coordinate efforts to enforce that law? Was the task force adequately staffed and financed? She had been concerned to hear that the interministerial committee that was supposed to provide policy guidance to the task force had met recently for the first time in eight years. Would it meet regularly in the future? She would like to know what kinds of steps were being taken to raise public awareness, particularly among women at risk of being trafficked. What remedial action had been taken, or was envisaged, to improve the currently low success rate of the prosecution of human trafficking cases? She wished to know more about how police officers and prosecutors were being trained to identify trafficking activity and to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases more effectively in a gender-sensitive manner. She would welcome up-to-date sex-disaggregated data on human trafficking, on the number of investigations undertaken and on the convictions secured and the types of punishments meted out. She would also like to have statistics on the number of women who had used the anti-trafficking hotline.

28. She would like to know what steps had been taken to provide prostitutes with access to health care, especially HIV/AIDS prevention methods and treatment, as many prostitutes living with HIV/AIDS were going untreated. She would welcome any statistics that were available on the number of prostitutes who had benefited from the scheme financed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to provide skills training and microcredit to sex workers in order to provide them with a viable exit strategy. Was a mechanism in place to track how many of those women succeeded in finding and remaining in other gainful forms of employment?

29. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that the interministerial committee had already begun to meet regularly, and a related technical committee met fortnightly. A national centre to provide training to social workers on human trafficking issues had been set up. Female genital mutilation had not been fully eradicated in Sierra Leone, but it had been made a criminal offence if it was done to a child under 18. The Government was committed to its eradication, but the issue was highly sensitive and it would have to be a gradual process.

30. **Ms. Fofanah** (Sierra Leone) said that it was important to understand the sociocultural context within which female genital mutilation took place and that outright prohibition would be counterproductive. The strong influence of the *Sowei*, members of the women's societies who carried out the practice, as well as of the members of men's secret societies, had to be taken into consideration. The Government had been accused by practitioners of discriminating against the very women it was trying to help. By taking a gradual approach, raising awareness and starting with the prohibition of female genital mutilation in the case of girls under 18, the practitioners had been brought on board, and there had already been a drastic reduction in the practice. A sustainable strategy would eventually lead to eradication.

31. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that a pilot scheme on the codification of customary law had been launched in one district. Laws that permitted harmful cultural practices, including female genital mutilation, would not be included in the codification process and would therefore be effectively removed. Significant progress had been made in Sierra Leone, as was attested to by the fact, for example, that, in the past it had been an offence under customary law even for women to talk openly about female genital mutilation, whereas at present, thanks to awareness-raising initiatives, the issue was debated publicly on the radio.

32. Witchcraft had been a crime since 1965. Cases of witchcraft were difficult to prosecute, however, since the courts could only deal with factual evidence, which was often missing in cases of witchcraft, as it was based on a belief system. The codification of customary law should bring an improvement in that respect.

33. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that the legal minimum age of sexual consent had been increased from 14 to 18 years and that the Sexual Offences Act of November 2012 prescribed stiff minimum sentences for offenders. The police had established a specialized family support unit that investigated sexual offences and other family-related violence. Because of increasing public awareness of the Act, the number of reports of violence had also increased. As part of a strategy to protect witnesses and victims, special Saturday courts to try cases of sexual and/or gender-based violence had been established that provided greater privacy for the parties directly concerned.

34. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that, under the Sexual Offences Act, "if a person induced another to engage in sexual activity by abusing a position of trust, power or authority, then the act was deemed to have been non-consensual. The recent conviction of a government official on the basis of that provision demonstrated that civil servants in Sierra Leone were held accountable for their actions.

35. **Mr. Vandi** (Sierra Leone) said that prostitution was illegal in Sierra Leone. A UNFPA-funded crisis centre provided skills training and other capacity-building services for commercial sex workers who wished to leave prostitution. He would ensure that data concerning the number of women who had been rehabilitated at the crisis centre and the number of perpetrators were transmitted to the Committee in due course. One of the innovative features of the Sexual Offences Act was that it made provision for the court to order that, in addition to any other punishment, a convicted offender should pay the victim reasonable compensation. Until the adoption of the Act, it had been necessary to undertake separate civil litigation in order to seek such compensation.

36. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that, since the offence of trafficking in persons in Sierra Leone usually involved the trafficking of girls or women for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, such offences tended to be dealt with under the Sexual Offences Act or the Protection of Women and Girls Act. The fact that the acts involved in trafficking and in the commission of sexual offences often overlapped explained why there were few statistics on the prosecution of cases of trafficking per se. He took note of the Committee members' suggestions that trafficking should be prosecuted as a separate offence.

37. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she would like to know whether the Government envisaged the establishment of special courts in which female legal professionals, including judges, officiated. She wished to know what efforts were being made to sensitize men to the harm caused to their daughters by incest, which appeared to be a widespread phenomenon in Sierra Leone. She would like to hear the views of the delegation concerning the phenomenon of male child preference in rural areas of Sierra Leone.

38. **Ms. Jahan** said that it was important to prosecute trafficking in persons as such, since there were differences between the penalties prescribed by the 2005 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and by the 2012 Sexual Offences Act. She wished to know whether there was a comprehensive strategy aimed specifically at combating trafficking in women and, if so, whether it was backed up by a national action plan.

39. **Ms. Šimonović** said that she would like to know whether, in order to prosecute the offence of female genital mutilation, it was possible to invoke section 33 (1) of the Child Rights Act of 2007, which prohibited cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including any cultural practice that dehumanized or was injurious to the physical or mental welfare of a child.

40. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that a comprehensive strategy for combating trafficking had been implemented. The strategy addressed the problems faced by women in a thorough manner, but was not confined exclusively to those problems.

41. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that male child preference was not unique to Sierra Leone but was a feature of all African cultures, which were traditionally patrilineal. Temporary special measures had been taken to support girls' education in order to bring the enrolment of girls up to par with that of boys.

42. Section 33 (1) of the Child Rights Act could not be invoked in the case of female genital mutilation because the subject matter of that section was child discipline. There had originally been a provision on female genital mutilation in the child rights bill; however, given the perception that the practice was a rite of initiation into female secret societies, there was opposition to the idea of formulating the provision in the explicit terms necessary for prosecutorial purposes, and the provision had consequently been rejected. Thus, despite the fact that the definition of female genital mutilation remained in the definitions section of the Child Rights Act, the corresponding operational clause had been removed. Progress was being made towards doing away with the practice altogether, but it was not yet defined as a criminal offence in Sierra Leone.

43. Contrary to what Ms. Pimentel had indicated, incest was not widespread in Sierra Leone. In fact, it was both unusual and considered taboo. Nonetheless, it was defined as an offence in the Sexual Offences Act under two separate provisions: one concerning incest committed by a man and another concerning incest committed by a woman.

44. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that a man convicted of incest was liable to a sentence ranging from 5 to 15 years' imprisonment.

45. **Ms. Pires** said that she was concerned at the fact that the number of women in political leadership and decision-making positions remained so low. She wished to know whether the minimum 30 per cent quota for women in government, which was provided for in the gender equality bill, applied to all elected positions, whether the quota would be mandatory and whether the gender equality bill included penalties for non-compliance with the quota. From information that she had received, it appeared that some political parties were in favour of a voluntary 30 per cent quota, while others had expressed support for parity between women and men on their candidates lists. She wondered whether that expression of good will by political parties could be translated into a far-reaching bill, whether there was support in Parliament for a mandatory minimum quota of 30 per cent for women in all elected positions and whether there were plans to review the Local Government Act of 2004 in order to establish a quota for women in local council elections.

46. She was concerned that, although the Chieftaincy Act of 2009 permitted women to stand as candidates for paramount chieftaincies, their election to those positions was subject to the dictates of tradition in certain regards, which gave rise to discrimination against women in some parts of the country. Were there plans to revisit the Chieftaincy Act with a view to its amendment? She wished to know whether the Government worked with civil society organizations to promote women's political participation, whether it had plans to increase the number of women in the diplomatic corps and why there were only 2 women out of the total of 27 cabinet ministers.

47. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that the appointment of cabinet ministers was the prerogative of the President, but he would bring the matter to the attention of the President upon his return to the capital. The Government was cooperating with many civil society organizations in Sierra Leone to address issues relating to women's participation in political life. The President had pledged his support for the minimum 30 per cent quota.

48. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that the quota provided for in the gender equality bill applied to both elected positions and executive appointments. Under the terms set out in the bill, the chief electoral commissioner would reject a party's nomination list if it was not in compliance with the quota. The bill would not require the President to appoint women to 30 per cent of cabinet posts because section 56, paragraph (1), of the Constitution gave the President the authority to appoint ministers and deputy ministers at his discretion. On the other hand, as that provision was inconsistent with the gender equality bill, it was hoped that there would be support for amending it in the course of the constitutional review process.

49. The proviso about tradition contained in the Chieftaincy Act was based on a constitutional provision which stated that "the institution of Chieftaincy as established by customary law and usage" was to be "guaranteed and preserved". That provision was being examined in the course of the constitutional review process, while the relevant provision of the Chieftaincy Act was being examined by the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development. The purpose of those reviews was to find ways of enhancing women's ability to vie for chieftaincy positions and thereby increase their role in providing political leadership.

50. **Mr. Momoh** (Sierra Leone) said that, following the population census that was to be taken in December 2014, there were plans to subdivide some of the large constituencies that had three or four chieftaincies. That, in turn, would open up more constituencies for women and would help to make it possible to meet the 30 per cent quota. Female genital mutilation had been practised in the region for centuries, and concerted efforts to raise awareness about its harmful effects on girls would be necessary before it could be eliminated.

51. **Ms. Pires** asked whether the Local Government Act would be examined as part of the constitutional review process and what the expected timetable was for the adoption of the gender equality bill.

52. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that the constitutional review process was expected to be completed in 2015. Since the 30 per cent minimum quota for women would apply to all elected and appointed positions, once the gender equality bill was adopted the Local Government Act would be amended accordingly.

53. **Ms. Schulz** said that she would like clarification concerning three aspects of the State party's national laws that appeared to be discriminatory. The first regarded a law under which Sierra Leonean women who gave birth abroad could not transfer their nationality to their children, even though Sierra Leonean men whose children were born abroad were entitled to do so. That discrepancy could be seen as a violation of article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, which conferred equal rights to women and men regarding the nationality of their children. The second was a provision that allowed a foreign woman who married a Sierra Leonean man to request naturalization but denied that right to a foreign man who married a Sierra Leonean woman. That was a violation of article 9, paragraph 1, of the Convention, which granted women and men equal rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality. The third concerned the difficulty reportedly experienced by persons of non-African descent born in Sierra Leone in obtaining Sierra Leonean nationality through naturalization. She asked for clarification of that situation, which had been the subject of a recommendation contained in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (A/HRC/18/10).

54. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that the first two concerns expressed by Ms. Schulz had been resolved by the Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2006, pursuant to which women could acquire and transfer Sierra Leonean citizenship on an equal footing with men. There was a challenge that was yet to be overcome, however, inasmuch as citizenship was not considered a human rights issue under national law. That was a serious

flaw that needed to be rectified in order to align the law with the Convention and other human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In its 2007 report, the constitutional review committee had recommended very strongly that citizenship should be treated as a human rights issue, and the current committee was taking that recommendation into account in its work.

55. Dual citizenship was permitted under Sierra Leonean law, so children born to Sierra Leonean parents abroad could have foreign as well as Sierra Leonean citizenship. He would refer Ms. Schulz's question concerning the naturalization of people of non-African descent to the specialized body that had taken part in the universal periodic review process. He asked the Chairperson to flag that question for consideration at the next universal periodic review of Sierra Leone.

56. **Ms. Schulz** said she had read about the amendments to the citizenship laws in 2006 but was under the impression that the two aspects she had mentioned had still not been addressed.

57. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that there was nothing to prevent a Sierra Leonean woman from transferring her citizenship to her children or to prevent her children from having dual citizenship. The law contained a general provision stipulating that any foreigner could apply for naturalization; however, certain criteria did have to be met.

58. **The Chairperson** said that she wished to know whether the Government issued an identity card to all members of the population at the time of their birth. She would also like to know what the average voter turnout rate for women in Sierra Leone was.

59. **Mr. Kaikai** (Sierra Leone) said that an identity card was issued to residents of Sierra Leone. Partly as a result of the efforts of civil society organizations, more women had registered to vote in the 2012 general elections than men, which demonstrated that women were fully engaged in the election process in Sierra Leone.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.